

“So angry” or rather “schon leicht wütend”? -

A study of language-specific emotion patterns in English and German

Emotion concepts in context such as ANGER or HAPPINESS have more recently been viewed from a contrastive perspective (Cislaru 2014; Constantinou 2014; Wierzbicka 2009). The present paper shows that the cognitive (corpus) linguistics framework (Kövecses 2000; Lakoff 1987; Lewandowska-Tomascyk/ Dziwirek 2009) of Emotion Events (Langacker 1987, 1991; Lewandowska-Tomascyk/ Wilson 2010), which are defined as the immediate contextual use of emotion lexemes and their sub-unit parameters such as intensifiers (Fronhofer, accepted) or cognitive verbs (Fetzer 2014), provides a *tertium comparationis* particularly suitable for revealing cross-linguistic contrasts in the actual use of emotion concepts in discourse. Considering the patterns of emotion lexemes with language-specific sets of sub-unit-parameters, which themselves may function as contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982, 1992ab), language-specific emergent and salient discourse patterns (Ariel 2008) may be disclosed.

Qualitative and quantitative analyses of data taken from a comparable, gender-balanced and topic-balanced corpus of elicited personal narratives (n= 248) written by British and German university students corroborate the postulations made above. More specifically, (1) intensifiers co-occurring with emotion lexemes may function as foregrounding/ backgrounding devices, (2) language-specific patterns have been identified, e.g. **upgrader** + ANGER/ AERGER (97,5%/ 67,7%) vs. **downgrader** + ANGER/ AERGER (12,5%/ 67,7%):

- (1) a. e_f_024_2 I'm **just so** happy [...]
- b. g_f_012_1 Ich werde dann **fast ein bisschen** wütend [...]
[**'nearly a bit angry'**]
- (2) a. e_f_033_1 I'm **so** annoyed right now [...]
- b. g_f_033_2 [...] bin aber **ein wenig** irritiert [...] [**'a bit irritated'**]
- c. e_f_033_2 [...] some of them were upset, and **I think probably** a bit jealous,
g_m_014_2 Dabei **bin ich mir sicher**, dass sie [...] jetzt einfach ein wenig neidisch sind.
[**'I am sure ... a bit jealous'**]

In follow-up studies, further emotion concepts (e.g. SURPRISE) as well as discourse patterns will be under scrutiny.

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